

Asthma management

An asthma action plan allows you and your doctor to create an individual plan for you to manage your asthma. An action plan advises you about what you must do to stay healthy and what to do when your asthma is unstable and you need help.

There is no 'standard' asthma action plan, as everyone's asthma is different. Your plan needs to be written to deal with your individual triggers, signs and symptoms, and medications. Your action plan might be based on symptoms, peak flow readings or both.

Asthma action plan

An asthma action plan outlines:

- How to care for your day-to-day asthma (it lists your regular medications and how many times each day you should take them)
- Key things that tell you when your asthma is getting worse or an 'attack' is developing, and the steps you should take to manage it
- Symptoms that is serious enough to need urgent medical help (with emergency information on what to do if you have an asthma 'attack').

Have your action plan reviewed every six months or after a severe asthma attack.

Plans for children

It is just as important for parents to obtain a clear, easy-to-understand written summary of their child's asthma management (asthma action plan). This will provide a source of reference to reinforce the advice given by the doctor.

This asthma action plan is also an important tool for anyone caring for your child. It provides up-to-date, detailed information (including your child's emergency first aid plan) to help manage your child's asthma. A copy of the asthma action plan should be sent to your child's school, kindergarten, childcare centre or to anyone caring for your child.

When the child is old enough to understand, make sure that you explain asthma to them and encourage them to be aware of their symptoms and how to treat them.

Asthma first aid

An asthma attack can take anything from a few minutes to a few days to develop. It can be a very frightening experience and people having an asthma attack need help straight away.

The four-step asthma first aid is:

1. Sit the person upright and give reassurance – do not leave them alone.
2. Without delay, give the person four separate puffs of their blue reliever medication (such as Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl, or Ventolin). If using a puffer (like Ventolin or Asmol), this should be taken one puff at a time via a spacer. Ask the person to take four breaths from the spacer after each puff of medication.
3. Wait four minutes. If there is little or no improvement, repeat steps 2 and 3.
4. If there is still no improvement, call an ambulance immediately. Dial triple zero (000). Repeat steps 2 and 3 continuously while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

A 'spacer' is a special device shaped like a clear plastic football or tube through which aerosol inhaler medications are inhaled. Bricanyl is the only reliever medication available in a dry powder inhaler and cannot be used with a spacer. Although Airomir comes in a puffer, it will not fit into all spacers.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Pharmacist
- The Asthma Foundation of Victoria Tel. 1800 645 130 or (03) 9326 7088
- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)

Things to remember

- If you have asthma, you need a personalised asthma action plan.
- Your asthma action plan needs to be reviewed regularly by your doctor.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Asthma Foundation of Victoria

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